Molecular Biology of Parasites

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Edited by J. Guardiola, L. Luzzatto and W. Trager

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Anyone who purchases this book expecting to read the first definitive account of the molecular biology of parasites will be disappointed. The title is all-embracing but the contents are not. Only 10 out of 18 chapters have much to do with molecular biology (e.g. the eighth chapter by D. Cioli is: Metazoan parasites: the schistosomes. An introductory guide to the literature.) and 4 of these make no more than passing reference to parasites (e.g. the last chapter by A.M. Guerrini and M. Iccarino: In vitro translation systems). The book is in fact an unblended mixture of parasitology, molecular biology and occasionally true parasite molecular biology. This discontinuity is highlighted by marked variations in the length of the chapters: they range from what is little more than abstract length (e.g. L. Luzzatto: Genetics and the malarial parasites, 1½ pages) to much more acceptable reviews (e.g. R.K.S. Wood: Mechanisms of disease resistance, 14 pages). It is a pity that the editors did not insist on a more systematic coverage and on tighter editorial control since a book which actually gives a comprehensive account of the molecular biology of parasites would be most welcome.

The book, however, is by no means without value: some of the chapters represent reviews which will be useful to many biologists. On the parasitology side, I particularly enjoyed M. Aikawa's review (Host-parasite interaction: electron-miscrocopic study) which is backed up by a valuable selection of electromicrographs. W. Trager, though best known for his work on malaria, has produced a well balanced review of parasite culture generally (in vitro growth of parasites). Similarly, on the molecular biological side, D. Walliker's chapter (Genetics of parasites), though biased to malaria because of the availability of information, does address itself also to other parasites. It is refreshing to read a review on kinetoplast DNA which does not originate from the USA or The Netherlands (P.A. Battaglia et al.: A puzzle genome: kinetoplast DNA)! The chapter by N. Bone et al. (Investigations of the DNA of the human malaria parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* by in vitro cloning into phage λ) is a very interesting account of what happens when a team of professional molecular biologists turn their full time attention to a parasite. The individual reader must decide for himself whether chapters such as these justify the purchase of the book.

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